

Common Course Syllabus
GOVT 2305
Department of Social Sciences
South Plains College

Department: Social Sciences

Discipline: Government

Course Number: GOVT 2305

Course Title: Federal Government

Credit: 3 Lecture, 0 Lab

This course partially satisfies a core curriculum requirement: Government/Political Science Foundational Component Area (070)

Available Formats: Conventional (Fully Face-to-Face), Fully Online, Hybrid, ITV

Campus: Levelland, Downtown Center, Plainview

Textbook: Varies according to instructor. Refer to each instructor's instructions for textbook requirements.

Course Specific Instructions: Each instructor will attach his/her course with specific instructions.

Course Description: Origin and development of the U.S. Constitution, structure and powers of the national government including the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, federalism, political participation, the national election process, public policy, civil liberties and civil rights.

Course Objectives addressed:

1. **critical thinking:** to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information.
2. **communication:** to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication.
3. **social responsibility:** to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.
4. **personal responsibility:** to include the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLO):

Students who have completed this course will:

1. Explain the origin and development of constitutional democracy in the United States.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of our federal system.
3. Describe separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice.
4. Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the federal government.
5. Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties.
6. Analyze the election process.
7. Describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens.
8. Analyze issues and policies in U.S. Politics.

Course Purpose: Government 2305, as taught at South Plains College, is a reading intensive course designed to acquaint the learner with the origin and development of the US Constitution, structure and powers of the national government including the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, federalism, political participation, the national election process, public policy, civil liberties and civil rights. This course meets the statutory requirements as set forth by the State of Texas.

Course Requirements: To maximize a student's potential to complete this course, he/she should attend all class meetings, complete all homework assignments and examinations in a timely manner, and complete all other projects or papers as assigned in the instructor's specific instructions.

Course Evaluation: See the instructor's course information sheet for specific items used in evaluating student performance.

Attendance Policy: Whenever absences become excessive and in the instructor's opinion, minimum course objectives cannot be met due to absences, the student will be withdrawn from the course. Each instructor will have additional information about attendance on his/her course information sheet.

Dropping a Course: Students may drop courses through Texan Connect, the Admissions and Records Office, or Advising and Testing Center through the late registration period. After late registration has closed, a student must complete the online [Student Initiated Drop Request](#) to drop a course.

Students may also drop courses in person at any campus location by completing a Student Initiated Drop Form. Complete a [Student Initiated Drop Form](#) and return the signed form to the Levelland Admissions and Records Office, the Student Support Center at the Lubbock Downtown Center, the Lubbock Career and Technical Center, or Plainview Center. You must have a picture ID to complete the drop.

A mark of "W" will be given for student-initiated drops that occur prior to and through the last day to drop as indicated in the online Academic Calendar found here:

<https://www.southplainscollege.edu/academiccalendar/index.php>.

Fall 2026
GOVT 2305-002-H002: Federal Government
Department of Social Sciences
South Plains College

Instructor Information

Dr. Jonathan Martin

Office: Student Services Building Room 116

E-mail: jmartin@southplainscollege.edu

Office Phone: 806-716-2198

Office Hours:

- Monday: 9:00–10:30am
- Tuesday: 11:00 am–12:00pm
- Wednesday: 9:00–10:30 am and 1:00–3:00 pm
- Thursday: 11:00am–12:00pm
- Friday: 10:00–11:00am

Textbook

We are using an OER (Open Educational Resource) from OpenStax. The textbook is FREE and available online through this link:

American Government 4e by Glen Kurtz and Sylvie Waskiewicz

ISBN-13: 978-1-961584-79-2

<https://openstax.org/details/books/american-government-4e>

OpenStax allows you to read the textbook online at the URL I have provided, or you can download it to your computer as a PDF file. In addition to the textbook, I may assign other reading material in Canvas throughout the semester.

Policies and Procedures

Participation Statement

For online courses, students **MUST** actively participate by completing an academic assignment by the official census date **September 9**. Students who do not do so, will be dropped from the course.

Syllabus Statements

South Plains College policies concerning Disabilities, Non-discrimination, Title IX Pregnancy and Parenting Accommodations, CARE (Campus Assessment, Response, and Evaluation), Intellectual Exchange, Campus Concealed Carry, COVID-19, and AI (Artificial Intelligence) can be found here: [Syllabus Statements](#).

Course Withdrawals

The last day to withdraw from this class with a grade of 'W' is **December 3**. Students are expected to do the required reading and turn in assignments by the due dates. As stated, if you get behind in your assignments, it is likely you will not finish the course and/or fail.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty, including cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, or unauthorized assistance, will not be tolerated in this course. This includes, but is not limited to, copying another student's work, submitting work completed by someone else, or using unapproved tools or sources. The use of AI tools, such as ChatGPT or similar, to generate, assist with, or complete any part of an assignment is strictly prohibited. The penalty for using AI is a zero for the assignment.

In addition, if a student cites a source in an assignment, I may request reasonable evidence that the student accessed and used the source directly, such as notes, page numbers, or screenshots. Failure to provide such evidence may be treated as academic dishonesty. In short, students are expected to complete their work with honesty, integrity, and in accordance with college policies.

Student Grievance Procedure

A student grievance is a College related issue or condition that a student believes to be unfair, inequitable, discriminatory, or a hindrance to the educational process. A grievance also includes discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. You can find more information about the student grievance procedure here:

http://www.southplainscollege.edu/human_resources/policy_procedure/fm.php

Grading and Evaluation

Grading Scale

A: 89.5-100%
B: 79.5-89.4%
C: 69.5-79.4%
D: 59.5-69.4%
F: Below 59.5%

Final Grade Calculation

Exams	60%
Quizzes	10%
In-Class Assignments	10%
Participation	10%
Essay	10%

Exams (60%)

There are three exams, and your exam average comprises 60% of your overall grade. Furthermore, all three exams will consist of multiple-choice and short answer questions. For the first two exams, there is a late penalty if you miss the exam for an unexcused reason. If you miss Exam 3 (final exam), you will receive a zero. Finally, you are not allowed to take any exam early.

Quizzes (10%)

I will assign at least four quizzes throughout the semester, assigned in Blackboard. Quiz formats may vary, and all quizzes will be based on assigned readings and course content. Your final quiz grade will be calculated as the average of all your quiz scores. A late penalty will apply if a quiz is missed for an unexcused reason.

Participation (10%)

Active participation is essential to your success in this class and, more broadly, to a meaningful learning experience. Your participation grade is based on attendance and the quality of your participation.

I will track your attendance throughout the semester. You are allowed up to six unexcused absences without penalty. Starting with the seventh unexcused absence, 5 participation points will be deducted for each additional unexcused absence.

Each student is also allowed three late arrivals without penalty. Starting with the fourth late arrival, five participation points will be deducted for each additional late arrival.

Students are also expected to remain engaged during class. Discussions typically occur on every regular class day, and you can contribute to your participation grade by answering questions or offering meaningful, constructive input during class discussions.

Finally, I may deduct participation points for violations of classroom expectations, including but not limited to excessive or distracting cell phone use during instruction or class discussions, leaving class early without an excused reason, wearing earbuds or headphones during instructional activities, and being disrespectful or rude to other students or the instructor. These deductions are applied only when classroom behavior interferes with the learning environment or fails to meet basic standards of academic professionalism and mutual respect.

If you have questions about your participation grade throughout the semester, you are welcome to ask me for feedback on how you are doing.

In-Class Assignments (10%)

In-class assignments are given regularly and are typically completed during class. These activities are discussion-based, and students who complete them in good faith will receive full credit. If you are absent on a day an in-class assignment is given, you must make up the assignment in class to receive credit.

Essay (10%)

This will be a 500-word essay on an assigned topic related to federal government. I'll provide detailed instructions for the assignment later in the semester.

Course Schedule*

Week 1 (Aug 24 & 26)

Course Overview

Chapter 1: American Government and Civic Engagement

Week 2 (Aug 31 & Sept 2)

Chapter 2: The Constitution and Its Origins

Week 3 (Sept 9)

No Class on Monday, September 7 (Labor Day)

Chapter 2: The Constitution and Its Origins

Week 4 (Sept 14 & 16)

Chapter 3: American Federalism

Week 5 (Sept 21 & 23)

Chapter 6: The Politics of Public Opinion

Week 6 (Sept 28 & 30)

Chapter 6: The Politics of Public Opinion

Exam 1 is on Wednesday, Sept 30

Week 7 (Oct 5 & 7)

Chapter 11: Congress

Week 8 (Oct 12 & 14)

Chapter 12: The Presidency

Week 9 (Oct 19 & 21)

Chapter 12: The Presidency

Week 10 (Oct 26 & 28)

Chapter 7: Voting and elections

Week 11 (Nov 2 & 4)

Chapter 7: Voting and elections

Exam 2 is on Wednesday, November 4

Week 12 (Nov 9 & 11)

Chapter 4: Civil Liberties

Chapter 13: The Courts

Week 13 (Nov 16 & 18)

Chapter 13: The Courts

Week 14 (Nov 23)

Chapter 9: Political Parties

No Class on Wednesday, November 25 (Thanksgiving Break)

Week 15 (Nov 30 & Dec 2)

Essay is due Monday, November 30

Chapter 10: Interest Groups and Lobbying

Chapter 5: Civil Rights

Week 16 (Dec 7)

Exam 3 is on Monday, December 7 at **10:15am**

*I reserve the right to alter the class schedule as I deem necessary. Any adjustments will be announced in class and/or listed on Blackboard.